

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a dark gray color, framing the central text.

**didn't take
forever to find it**

loveism

didn't take forever to find it by loveism

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Summary:

His fingertips are warm underneath the skin of Eddie's eyes, warm across the line of his jaw and the bridge of his nose. Eddie closes his eyes and lets Richie touch his face.

aka: points of contact between richie and eddie through the years

didn't take forever to find it

Author's Note:

title from loving is easy by rex orange county

Stepping out of the darkness of the sewers and into warm, bright summer atmosphere, Eddie thinks it should be dark.

His stomach is churning, acidity rising up in his throat. The feeling of fear has settled down and only washes over him in waves, but his shoulders wrack with shakes every few minutes. He's clutching Mike's hand so tightly his knuckles ache, Beverly at his side.

"Do you think it's gone?" Ben asks, somewhere behind him. Bill walks ahead of him and his shoulders are slumped. Eddie traces his eyes on the outline of his shoulder blades through his thin flannel shirt. He turns and he's older than he looks, suddenly. Atlas with the weight of the world on his back.

He shrugs. Ben doesn't say anything else and Mike lets go of Eddie's hand with a small smile, turning and talking quietly to Ben. Mike is always a reassuring warmth, protective and stable. Eddie loves him for it.

"Hey, Eds," Richie's beside him. Eddie groans.

"Please don't, trashmouth. I'm not in the fucking mood," he says, and Richie holds his hands up.

"Alright, alright!" He's doing another one of his Voices again—the stupid fucking British guy. "I came over here to tell you you've got shit all over your face." He raises a hand, fingers brushing over Eddie's cheek gently.

Eddie blinks at him. Richie's back is to the sun and his shoulders are blurry, entire silhouette swathed in gold. Ignited like a candle flame. Heat rolls off of him in waves and Eddie thinks back to the sewers, back to the floating heads and the icy rush of fear that numbed him all the way to his toes.

Eddie reaches out suddenly, chest constricting. He can't breathe but his fingertips touch the edges of Richie's wrists, still on his face. He's grimacing, eyebrows furrowed as he wipes off the vomit from Eddie's face.

His fingertips are warm underneath the skin of Eddie's eyes, warm across the line of his jaw and the bridge of his nose. Eddie closes his eyes and lets Richie touch his face.

"Fuckin' disgusting," he says. Eddie's fingers twitch around bone and flesh, warmth blooming from his ribs. Richie's eyes are wide behind his stupid fucking glasses and Eddie swipes his thumb over a nick in the boy's skin. Raised flesh in jagged pink. A bicycle accident on the gravel, mouthfuls of dirt and skinned knees.

"Speak for yourself," Eddie grumbles, and Richie grins at him.

"Can help ya preserve water, Eds," He lowers his hands. Eddie's wrists fall to his thighs limply, lost. "Shower together." He winks.

Eddie scoffs and rolls his eyes. "Beep beep, Richie," There's no heat or malice. Just his tone, soft and quiet in the melancholic summer wind.

"Oh! You know how to wound a man," Richie clutches at his chest and buckles his knees, hands raised to the sky. Eddie shakes his head, smile tugging at the corners of his mouth as he walks away.

Maybe that's how he knows that everything will be okay. Richie skinning his knees on old rocks and wailing and Beverly gathering him into a hug, Bill's eyes distant and tired but they're all still here. He thinks they'll be alright.

*

Beverly left them a week after the sewers, packed up for a tiny town in Oregon with her bags at her ankles.

Everyone gathered at the bus stop, exchanging hugs and last minute jokes, ruffled hair and watery smiles. They waved at her and watched her leave from the little window she sat beside, Richie blowing kisses and chasing after the bus until it disappeared past a curb. He came

back to the group with a slight slump to his shoulders, and Bill placed his arm around them and walked them back to his house.

Now, though—snow crunches underneath Eddie’s shoes as he shifts, posture hunched against the cold. Sheets of snow shiver in front of him. It’s winter break and also the first time everyone will be back together again as a group in three months. He walks in the frost and the weak winter sun with everyone at his side, all of them laughing a bit too loudly, smiles bright.

“How’s Portland?” Mike asks. He’s bundled up in about as many layers as Eddie is, but his body still wracks itself with shivers. Beverly hums, adjusts the strap of her bag against her shoulder.

“It’s good,” she answers. She’s smiling and Eddie thinks it looks good on her—she deserves for Portland to be good to her. Deserves to get out of Derry and stretch her legs, find something that fits her better. “I’m really happy to be back here, though.”

“Aw, Bev!” Richie’s voice carries through the winter air like a knife, and Bev is smiling as he wraps an arm around her shoulders. “Just say you missed us. C’mon, no one’ll judge.”

Beverly rolls her eyes but the warmth on her face says enough.

They shiver the remaining walk to Bill’s house, hands stuffed in pockets and shoulders hunched. Richie scrambles to be the first in through the door, shedding his layers of clothing and gesturing around the empty space as Beverly walks in the room behind him. He pretends to give her a tour of the house as if they all haven’t been there before, arm locked in Beverly’s. She nods at all the right parts and makes comments. Eddie catches Bill’s eye and grins.

“What movie we watching tonight, Bill?” Ben asks. He sets his shoes aside and goes over to the couch, bundling up under the many blankets that have been piled there. Bill makes a noise in the back of his throat.

“It’s Mike’s t-turn to p-pick,” he says, and Mike’s head appears from the mound of blankets he’s under from his position on the floor.

“Ghostbusters?” he grins, and Ben laughs.

“Alright!”

Richie and Beverly make their way back into the living room once Stan calls them back. Richie claims the seat in between Ben and Eddie on the couch, and Beverly sits at Ben’s feet. Stan and Bill are lying on their stomachs next to Mike on the floor, and everyone grows quiet as the opening screen appears on the television.

The weak winter sun nestles back into the earth, flooding the room with watery golds and pinks. Eddie watches Mike and Bev throw popcorn at each other—much to Bill’s disappointment—and feels a sudden wave of something.

It rises up in his stomach, fills him up from the inside out with warmth. He looks around the room and sees the friends he’s known for months but feels like a lifetime. He feels the soft cotton of the blanket he shares with Richie and remembers the time he fell asleep on the same couch years ago, when there were only four of them and when there wasn’t any haunting memories nestled into the corners of their lives.

The feeling seizes him, crawls up his throat. He feels like he’s known them all his life.

“Hey, Eds,” Richie is tapping his elbow; Eddie turns, shifting on his side to look at him with a frown.

“What?” he hisses, and Richie grins. “Don’t call me that.”

“I’m freezing,” Richie says. Eddie shakes his head, confusion on his features.

“And? I don’t know what the fuck you expect me to do about it,”

“Aw, c’mon Eds,” Richie clicks his tongue against the roof of his mouth, once. Eddie watches as lights from the television play across his features, light green and blue. They twirl around his face and sharpen the lines of his jaw. “You don’t wanna cuddle?”

“Fuck off, Richie,” Eddie groans, and he shifts further down the

couch and burrows his face into the blanket. He gives more of it to Richie and Richie lets out a breath of a laugh, light and fluttery.

They're halfway through the movie when Richie won't stop moving.

He crosses and uncrosses his legs, moves his arms around the back of the couch and back into his lap. Eddie sees him out of the corner of his eye and sighs.

"Stop moving, dickhead," he says, and Richie makes an offended noise.

"Stop talking during a movie, Eddie spaghetti," he retorts. Eddie rolls his eyes. "It's rude."

"He has a point," Stan says, but Eddie catches his eyes and knows he's not serious. He and Mike have been having an ongoing discussion on the floor for about fifteen minutes.

"Just—" Eddie shifts further back into the corner of the couch. Richie stares at him, his eyes glinting in the darkness. Eddie ignores the feeling in his throat and leans sideways, swinging his legs over the end of the couch, placing his head in Richie's lap.

For a moment, Richie stays completely still and Eddie is fighting the urge to stand up and walk out of the room. He's terrified he's made a huge mistake and he opens his mouth to say something, but he hears Richie coo above him.

"Aw, Eds," His hand shifts down to pinch Eddie's cheek. Eddie scowls. "You're too cute."

"Shut the fuck up and watch the movie,"

Richie laughs but doesn't move again. His hand leaves Eddie's cheek and instead tangles in his hair, weaving in and out through the curls at the nape of his neck.

Since Eddie discovered his illnesses were fake, he's stopped listening to every word his mother says. He's let his hair grow out a few more inches and instead lets it curl over his ears and the back of his neck.

Now, though—he finds himself being lulled to sleep by the gentle hand that runs through his hair. The sounds of the television are drowned out by the beating of his own heart, trapped in his throat. Richie’s breathing is steady and even behind him, his thigh warm against his cheek.

Throughout the night, Eddie doesn’t wake once.

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Derry has been an open wound for a while.

It stings and burns and warps into something completely different—something Eddie doesn’t want to face. He knows the others feel it too.

No one forgets what happened—Eddie sometimes wakes up in the middle of the night with a tightening in his chest and Stan sometimes doesn’t meet anyone’s eyes, his expression glazed over and distant. Bill doesn’t forget what happened to Georgie but Eddie knows he wants to.

They swim in the Quarry just like any other time and start high school. Mike joins them, after many days pleading with his grandfather, and they send letters to Beverly and await for the day when she can visit again.

Richie is—well. Richie is leaning against Eddie’s locker as soon as the bell rings. Eddie groans.

“Hey Eds!” He grins, wide and bright. Eddie pushes his hair back from his face and opens his locker. “Gross. Why are you all sweaty?”

Eddie glares at him. “I have gym last period, assbat. Move so I can put my books up.”

Richie holds his palms up, placating and feigning innocence. Eddie throws his biology book into his locker and takes out his history, shoving it in his bag. Students bustle around them, shoving each other and yelling. Eddie can feel Richie’s eyes on the side of his face.

“Wanna go to the Quarry?” he asks, as soon as Eddie closes his locker and turns to begin walking away. “Bill said he’d meet us there with everyone else after his club meeting.”

Eddie hums, soft and distant in the back of his throat. Richie falls into step beside him.

“I didn’t bring my bike with me today,” Eddie replies after a moment of thinking. Richie sighs, long and drawn out.

“C’mon, Eds. That’s a child’s excuse,” He waves a hand, dismissing the thought from the air. Eddie raises his eyebrows. “I’ve got a perfectly good seat you can ride on. As well as—”

“Alright, alright,” Eddie cuts him off, already knowing what Richie was going to say. He’s grinning, shoving at Eddie’s shoulder playfully as they enter the bright sunlight.

Richie unlocks his bike and swings his legs around it, patting the extra seat behind him and squinting up at Eddie. “C’mon now, don’t be shy!” He’s doing the British accent again, cupping a hand around his mouth to accentuate the words as if he’s speaking through a microphone. “We’ve got plenty o’ room here on Richie’s Rides!”

Eddie rolls his eyes but takes the seat behind Richie anyway, placing his feet on the pedals and his hands on Richie’s shoulders. The summer heat is dying little by little everyday as fall grows nearer, but with the strenuous gym period combined with the last remains of humidity, Eddie feels sweat sticking to his thighs underneath his red shorts.

“Ugh,” he groans. Richie backs up out of the small space and rings the bell on his bike before taking off, pedalling at a steady pace.

The wind whips at their hair as they make their way down the streets, passing cars and trees with Richie’s commentary every so often. Eddie feels fear grip at his stomach every time they pass over a particularly rough bump, and he finds himself resisting the urge to wrap his arms around the boy in front of him.

Richie notices this. He turns his head slightly to the side, grinning.

"If you're scared, Eds, you can put your arms around my waist,"

"I'm not scared," Eddie grumbles, but as soon as the words are out they pass over another bump, jostling him. He feels his fingertips tightening on Richie's shoulders and Richie's laughing, head thrown back and curls blowing in the wind. Eddie loosens his grip, swearing under his breath. He wraps his arms tentatively around Richie's stomach, locking his fingers together and focusing his attention on the grass around them to distract himself from the heat in his cheeks.

They make it to the Quarry just in time to see Stan push Bill into the water. Bill resurfaces, spluttering water and pushing hair back from his eyes. Ben is sitting on the dirt with Mike at his side, talking quietly about a book that sits between them.

"Well, Eds," Richie says, swinging his legs back over the bike and grinning. His eyes glint in the afternoon sun, bright and mischievous. Eddie sighs and shakes his head. "Bet ya haven't been on a date that fun."

"Hanging with your sister was *much* more fun," Eddie bites back immediately. He gets off the bike and discards his backpack, stretching his legs. Richie laughs and waves at Stan, who gestures for him to make his way over to him. Eddie watches him leave, long legs kicking up the dirt behind him.

*

Snow falls in sheets in front of Eddie, twisting and hurling toward the ground like a hurricane.

His shoulders are hunched forward, nose pressed into the scarf that's wrapped around his neck. It's January and Bev is visiting again—only this time, it's just Richie and Eddie waiting at the bus stop.

"I'm freezing my dick off," Richie grumbles. He only has on a jacket and a hat; Eddie feels shivers wrack his body just from looking at him. "God. What time is she gonna get here?"

"I don't know," Eddie says, "Stan didn't tell me anything before shoving me out the door with balloons taped to his hands."

Richie hums a sound low in his throat. Eddie twists his feet in the snow, wiggles his toes inside his shoes to try and put some warmth back into them.

“What college did she get accepted to again?”

Eddie considers for a moment, squinting his eyes against the winter sun as he thinks. “It’s some big art school in New York, I think.”

“Woah!” Richie breathes. Eddie turns to him and his eyes are abnormally wide behind his glasses. “Our girl’s makin’ it, Eddie spaghetti!”

They’re all eighteen and terrified of the future, Eddie thinks. Senior year hasn’t been easy, but something heavy and cold settles into his gut whenever he realizes it’s the last time they’ll all be together. It sinks to the bottom of him like a stone.

He’s going to New York and Bill is moving to California with Stan. Mike is heading for Pennsylvania; Ben is going to Maine. Richie hasn’t said anything about where he’s going, but Eddie knows that he’s going somewhere. They all are—away from Derry and into new territory, away from the nagging darkness on street corners and shadows stretched out against the walls.

It should scare Eddie—but instead he feels anxious, like he’s going to itch out of his own skin. Derry makes him feel like that most days, like his skin is burning him up from the inside out. It has since he was a kid.

“C’m on Bev,” Richie whines. “Hasn’t she heard it’s rude to keep a man waiting?”

“Shut the fuck up, Richie,” Eddie says. He turns to face the other boy. His skin has turned a bright shade of red from the cold and he snuffles every so often, scrunching his nose and letting out puffs of air. “Why didn’t you wear something other than that?”

Richie looks at him, feigning annoyance. “It’s called *fashion*, my dear Eds,” He sniffs again, pursing his lips. “At least I don’t look like a total jackass.”

“God, you’re so fucking—” Eddie unfurls his hands from his jacket pockets, reaching up and untwisting his scarf from his neck. It’s a cream colored fabric—cotton—and it scratches against his cold face. “Here.”

Richie looks over at him, eyebrows raised. Eddie rolls his eyes.

He steps forward, standing on his tip-toes in the frozen slush and glittering snow. Richie has gotten taller over the years, standing a head taller than Eddie is. His curls frame his pale face and red nose, pink-bitten lips opened in surprise as Eddie brings the scarf around his neck.

Richie is staring at him and Eddie ignores his gaze, ignores the warmth that floods through his ribs as he steps back down to his normal height. His fingers brush against the skin of Richie’s cheek, they catch on one of his curls.

He clears his throat and turns away, stuffing his hands back into his pockets.

“Such a gentleman, Eds,” Richie says, but there’s a tone that Eddie can’t quite recognize, can’t catch. It makes Eddie’s pulse skip in his throat.

Beverly’s bus comes around the corner and Eddie forgets about it, waving to the girl in the window.

*

“Richie?”

It’s July and the familiar heat wraps itself around Eddie’s shoulders. Richie stands at the Quarry, his back to Eddie.

“Eds, my boy!” Richie swivels around on his heels. Eddie stops walking when he’s standing in front of the other boy, digging his feet into the dirt and rock underneath him. “How’s it goin’?”

“You saw me yesterday,” Eddie replies dryly, but there’s a smile tugging at his mouth.

Richie is smoking a cigarette, nicotine drifting into tendrils above him. Eddie waves them away with his hand, scrunching up his nose and coughing. Richie looks at him through squinted eyes but reaches down and stubs it out anyway. Eddie's comment about it being bad for him goes left unsaid.

"Where's everyone else?" he asks instead. Richie leans back against the tree and closes his eyes. Eddie watches as he tilts his face up toward the sun, and the shadows of leaves are shifting over his face wildly.

He's all lanky limbs and sharp lines and that feeling crawls up Eddie's throat again—the feeling he's felt since he was fourteen and listening to bands that Richie likes alone in his room, heart thumping madly against his skin.

He looks at his best friend sometimes and feels something foreign to him. He brushes hands with him and meets his gaze, smiles at him brightly. His chest tugs and Eddie doesn't feel ashamed anymore.

"I didn't—" Richie pauses. He swallows, the line of his throat moving with it. "I didn't ask them to come today."

Eddie furrows his eyebrows. Richie steps forward, kicks a rock with the toe of his shoe.

"You saw me yesterday, Rich," Eddie says, soft and small in his throat. "What's up?"

"Can I kiss you?"

Eddie blinks at the boy in front of him. His eyes are wide behind his thick glasses, nose tinted a slight shade of red from the sunburn he got a few weeks ago. He doesn't answer for a few seconds—doesn't think he can.

So instead he lunges forward, feels his heel trip up on a rock and collides with Richie's chest. He tilts his face up and meets the other boy's lips, drags him down by his collar and meets him halfway on his toes.

The water beside them glints off of the sun. Richie has his hands

fisted in the cotton of Eddie's shirt and Eddie has a hand on Richie's collarbone, small and pale against the black cotton of his shirt.

"Come to New York with me," Eddie rushes out, standing back and pressing his forehead to Richie's.

Richie's grin is blurry and bright and he stares at Eddie, hands still gripping his waist.

"Wouldn't miss it for the world, would I Eds?"

Author's Note:

the gay agenda is being touch starved